

## DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Multi-National Brigade (East) Camp Bondsteel APO AE 09340



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## Greek soldiers meet with leaders of Ferizaj/ Urosevac

Camp Rigas Feres, Kosovo: Maj. Kriakos Kondogiannis, commander of the Greek 525<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Battalion, along with members of the Multi-national Brigade-East staff invited local leaders from the Ferizaj/ Urosevac area to an April 7 dinner at Camp Rigas Fereos. The dinner brought the two groups together to discuss the riots of March 17 and 18, and ways to improve overall security of soldiers and residents of Ferizaj/Urosevac.

Over a traditional Greek meal, Kondogiannis told the local leadership of his desire to provide a safe and secure environment once the 525<sup>th</sup> returns to downtown Ferizaj/ Urosevac in the near future.

"All the soldiers of MNB(E) – the Greeks, the Pol-Ukraine, and the US soldiers – all have the same mission with the same goals. These goals are to support the rule of law and provide a safe and secure environment for the people of Kosovo," Kondogiannis said. "We will not tolerate violence directed towards minorities or any of our soldiers. An act of violence directed toward our soldiers is viewed as an attack against all MNB(E) soldiers."

Local leaders, including Hajir Gashi of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), municipal president of Urosevac/ Ferizaj Adem Salihaj, and Sylejman Bytyqi of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), apologized for the violence of those days and said they are doing everything possible to bring the situation in the town back to the way it was before the riots.

"Our biggest problem now is the political damage that was caused. We're working very hard to return the situation as much as possible before March 17," said Salihaj. "In all meetings we've held with the community and with UNMIK representatives we have shown our support with KFOR soldiers and we believe their mission is to work towards a free and safe Kosovo and we condemn any violent action that is done or might be done against them."

Also invited was Col. Steven Saunders, deputy commander of maneuver for MNB(E), to facilitate the discussion.

"As MNB(E), it matters not whether we're wearing an American flag, a Greek flag, a Polish flag, Ukrainian, Armenian, or any other nationality that might be associated with us," said Saunders. "We all speak with the same voice, and you can expect the utmost professionalism from us while we're together. I would hope that additional conversation as the days go on will focus on that compelling vision to take not only Ferizaj forward, but also Kosovo."

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For further information about this release or UNMiK press badging, contact SSG W.

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